

STATEMENT OF

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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

concerning

INTERDICTION OF DRUG SMUGGLING FROM MEXICO

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address you concerning the United States Border Patrol's role in the Administration anti-narcotics initiative.

The United States Border Patrol, the mobile, uniformed law enforcement division of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), is the primary federal agency for drug interdiction between ports of entry with support from U.S. Customs Service officers. Customs officers are responsible for interdiction at the ports themselves with support from INS inspectors.

The Border Patrol maintains a direct presence on the border along 8,000 miles of land and water boundary. Nearly 2,000 miles lie along the Southwest border where the Patrol is staffed by more than 5,400 agents.

Congress and the Clinton Administration have made control of illegal immigration a top priority and have worked to provide INS with the resources necessary to support an enforcement strategy that is making a difference now, and that will continue to make a difference in the future. The strategy restores the rule of law to the Southwest border. Our goals are clear: deter illegal immigration, drug trafficking, and alien smuggling between the ports of entry, and facilitate legal immigration through the ports of entry. We appreciate the resources and policy support which Congress and the Administration have provided in the last three years toward achieving this goal.

--to provide the Border Patrol and other INS enforcement divisions with the personnel, equipment, and technology to deter, detect and apprehend unauthorized aliens, illicit drugs, and other contraband.

--to regain control of major entry corridors along the border that have been controlled by illegal migrants and smugglers; and

--to close off the routes most frequently used by smugglers and illegal aliens and to shift traffic to areas that are more remote and difficult to cross, giving us the tactical advantage.

Intelligence reports and actual experience indicate that drug smuggling and alien smuggling are often linked. Many smuggling rings are involved in both alien and drug smuggling. Illegal migrants seeking assistance from alien smugglers--sometimes called coyotes--often become mules carrying narcotics as part of the price of passage to interior points in the United States.

The Border Patrol employs a multi-faceted strategy in executing its enforcement activities to deter and/or apprehend narcotics and alien smugglers along the border. At the immediate border we deploy agents and utilize fences, high powered lights, sensor systems, low-light TV cameras, night vision scopes, canine

We also employ a system of traffic checkpoints situated along major roads and highways leading away from the border. These checkpoints are highly effective in the interdiction of both aliens and drugs. Specially trained Border Patrol Agents have been delegated limited authority under Title 21 by the DEA. Border Patrol Agents have also been given limited Title 19 authority by the U.S. Customs Service. These grants of authority allow the agents to enforce federal criminal laws related to the illicit trafficking and importation of contraband, including illegal drugs.

In the past 3 years, the Border Patrol has undergone unprecedented growth nationwide. We increased the number of agents from 3,965 in 1993 to 6,878 by the end of Fiscal Year 1996, and our goal is to have almost 7,400 agents by the end of 1998. This will represent an 85 percent increase in Border Patrol Agents since the end of Fiscal Year 1993. Beginning in 1994, we concentrated new Border Patrol Agents in those sectors which have historically apprehended the largest numbers of illegal aliens plus sectors which have experienced the greatest increase in illegal migrant flows. (See attached chart of Border Patrol Staffing and Apprehensions by Sector.) We also initiated strategies in the El Paso, San Diego, Tucson, and McAllen (Texas) sectors that are designed specifically for those geographical areas.

example of our deterrent strategy. It was designed to maximize the visibility of Border Patrol Agents along a 20 mile stretch of the border formed by the Rio Grande River. The goal was to preclude unauthorized entries into the city and environs of El Paso. Once in the city, it was much easier for the aliens to obtain unauthorized employment or move further into the interior of Texas, New Mexico and the rest of the United States.

Operation Gatekeeper applied a similar deterrent strategy beginning in October 1994 in San Diego. Given the different terrain and makeup of the border-crossers, this operation combines immediate border visibility with an expanded support infrastructure including stadium-style lighting, portable lighting, fencing, night vision scopes, and sensors. It also involves applying pressure on smugglers at their drophouses, and at checkpoints on the major roads leading north, to Los Angeles and the interior of California.

In February 1995, we began tactical operations in Arizona with Operation Safeguard in Nogales and, later, Douglas. Safeguard combines the presence and visibility of the agent patrols in the most populated areas with additional strategically located traffic checkpoints on roads leading away from the border.

In the fall of 1996, McAllen Sector increased its anti-smuggling efforts by targeting staging areas, drop houses, and citizen complaints. At the same time,

conducting joint operations with the U.S. Customs Service, Department of Defense, and State and local law enforcement agencies.

We've seen dramatic success in each of these areas. The daily migration from Juarez to El Paso was cut by approximately 75 percent in the first months of Operation Hold the Line. Even with the effect of peso devaluation, apprehensions in El Paso have remained low. Since Operation Gatekeeper began, illegal entries into San Diego's Imperial Beach area, historically the most heavily trafficked illegal corridor, have dropped approximately 60 percent (186,894 in Fiscal Year 1994 to 74,979 in Fiscal Year 1996). Operation Safeguard in Nogales has had similar results. Consistent with the beginning of a new tactical strategy, apprehensions in the McAllen Sector are up 34 percent from January 1996 to January 1997. Local law enforcement officials attribute a decrease in crime in those communities --at least in part -- to Border Patrol initiatives.

We have continued to expand the use of technology in support of our agents in all of our southwest border sectors. We have installed 146 IDENT terminals in 78 locations. IDENT enables agents to fingerprint, photograph, and collect biographical data on the aliens we arrest. The system also provides agents with a real time look-out system for known criminals. The cumulative database tracks repeat offenders and will help us follow alien migration patterns, so we can anticipate necessary tactical and strategic changes.

We have found night vision equipment to be an extremely effective tool. Since 1993, the Border Patrol has procured 164 long-range, infra-red night vision scopes. During Fiscal Year 1996, the Border Patrol has deployed a total of 96 new night vision scopes. This does not include excess equipment obtained from military sources. Today, all sectors have long-range infrared night vision equipment.

A large proportion of Border Patrol drug seizures and a tremendous amount of real-time intelligence are a direct result of electronic sensors placed along remote or inaccessible smuggling routes. Since 1993, 4,321 sensors have been procured. That brings our current total quantity of sensors to 9,206.

The Border Patrol Canine Program is another example of our commitment to controlling the flow of narcotics and aliens across our borders. We have 139 dogs trained to locate people and drugs. Ten more dogs and dog handlers are in training. The dog teams operate throughout the Border Patrol with concentrations in those Sectors that operate traffic checkpoints. During Fiscal Year 1996, Border Patrol dog teams located 25,534 people, and made 3,036 drug seizures valued at \$425.8 million. As part of our interagency initiatives, our dogs have responded to 1,736 requests for canine assistance from other law enforcement agencies.

Although investigation of narcotics cases is not a function per se of the INS or the

primary part of our mission. The volume of Border Patrol drug seizures has climbed steadily: from 150 tons of marijuana in Fiscal Year 1991, to 330 tons of marijuana in 1996. Since 1991, we have seized 84 tons of cocaine. These interdictions have provided critical leads to the investigative agencies, contributing to the disruption of drug trafficking organizations and independent smugglers. The combined value of our drug seizures is nearly two billion dollars. There is no dollar value that can be attached to the problems associated with these drugs, if they had been allowed on our streets and in our schools.

These seizures were made as part of our primary mission of controlling the border through deterrence and interdiction. To give a further indication of the magnitude of our workload, we made 1,507,020 arrests of illegal immigrants along the Southwest border during 1996.

In performing all these tasks, the Border Patrol has formed effective, lasting partnerships with the DEA, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, Customs, the Department of Defense, the Department of State and a number of foreign governments, including the government of Mexico.

INS has received significant support from the United States military and National Guard units based on Presidential directives and Congressional legislative provisions that the Department of Defense should provide counter-drug

drug trafficking. Military and National Guard personnel are currently serving as listening post/observation post monitors, intelligence analysts, electronic technicians, helicopter pilots, vehicle and aircraft mechanics, bus drivers, sensor board monitors, low-light television operators, and firing range officers.

Over the past several years, military and National Guard personnel have built over 41 miles of border fencing and barriers in California and Arizona. This year, various military and National Guard units will complete another 14.2 miles in California and Arizona. Military construction units have also built roads to access the border in areas where they have built border fences and barriers. These roads significantly enhance our effectiveness by giving us access to areas that we could not easily patrol before they were built.

The Border Patrol works with Mexican law enforcement along the border to stem border robbers preying on migrants, drug smuggling, and other criminal activity. We have created procedures and structures for a more rapid and coordinated response to specific criminal activity.

The Mexican Government has designated formal organizations called Grupo Beta in the San Diego-Tijuana area and the Nogales, Arizona-Nogales, Mexico area that focus on combating crime and drug smuggling at the border. In addition to Grupo Beta, the other sectors also have cross-border quick response activities that

Another positive stride we have made with Mexico concerns lane runners, large groups of aliens that ran through vehicle inspection lanes at the San Ysidro port of entry into oncoming traffic on Interstate Route 5. Some of these lane runners were smuggling packets of heroin attached to their bodies. Border Patrol and Grupo Beta, working cooperatively, share success in eliminating this type of drug smuggling and border running.

In summary, let me say that the mission of the INS and its Border Patrol are committed and equipped to work, in cooperation with other agencies, to secure the external borders of the United States.

Our approach emphasizes:

- Prevention through deterrence
- Flexibility to address vulnerable areas via a comprehensive strategy
- Technology as a force multiplier
- Redeployment of personnel and resources to key border areas.

The U. S. Government has made clear progress in regaining control along the Southwest border. The INS is advancing each of the key objectives of the border control strategy. It has secured areas of the border where just two years ago aliens

crossers to remote regions, thus using longer and more arduous routes while subjecting themselves to greater risk of apprehension. In short, INS is successfully raising the cost and difficulty of entering the United States illegally.

These efforts have also disrupted former routes for bringing in illicit drugs. They have forced smugglers and port-runners to use ports of entry and untraditional routes (e.g. tunnels) to further their illegal activities. Moreover, Operation Hard Line, a Customs program aimed at such activities, complements the Border Patrol tactical operations along the border, all of which support the Administration's anti-drug efforts on the Southwest border.

Regaining control of our borders is an on-going task. We appreciate the attention of this Committee to the problems we face, and, again, thank the Congress for its support of our endeavor.

This concludes my written testimony and I will now answer any questions you may have.